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CONTEMPLATION

ON THE

INSUFFICIENCY OF REASON,

AND THE

NECESSITY OF DIVINE REVELATION

TO ENABLE US TO ATTAIN

ETERNAL HAPPINESS.

To which is prefixed,

THE CHARACTER OF AN HONEST  
FREE - THINKER.

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By JOHN RYLAND, A.M.  
OF NORTHAMPTON.

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L O N D O N :

Printed for VALLANCE and SIMMONS, No. 120, Cheapſide.  
M.DCC.LXXV.

[ Price Six-pence. ]

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LONDON

PRINTED BY

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## P R E F A C E.

**D**EMONSTRATION consists in beginning with some single idea of your subject, and then joining a second idea of the same kind with the first, and a third to the second; and so on in a clear connexion.

And thus proceeding, by short steps of the understanding, from idea to idea, from thought to thought, in proper words and in a clear connexion of ideas, till you come to a satisfying conclusion, which shall appear as evident to the mind as the first idea with which you set out. And the whole chain of ideas shall appear, to the eye of the understanding, to be closely and clearly connected, and give you that keen impression of truth, and strike the mind with that force, which is called conviction.

I rejoice to find that my thoughts, exactly correspond with the sentiments of that incomparable reasoner, and very excellent divine, Dr. Wittius, who expresses himself thus, in his address to

the professors of divinity and ministers of the gospel in the United Provinces, prefixed to his most admirable Body of Theology, intituled, *Oeconomia Fœderum*, 4to, 1693.

“ Nihil fortius certiusque animos convincit quam perspicua et sedata veritatis ad conscientiam DEMONSTRATIO, quæ placido procedens gressu a claris ac confessis orsa, et assertiones suas continua concatenatione nectens, paullatim; ad abstrusiora ducit, iisque non minus adstipulari cogit, quam quæ primo obrutu assensum impetrant; arcana interim efficacitate in penitus animæ partes illabens, easque in admirandarum Dei virtutum contemplatione cum stupore quodam figens.”

And in book I. chap. viii. sect. xiv. he thus speaks—Dilucida veritatis demonstratione plane tollatur. Quod ab evidentioribus incipiendo, continua argumentorum ex se invicem enascensium serie, ita nos pertexuros arbitramur; ut vel ab invitis impetremus assensum.

The design of this essay is to oppose the pride of man, and thus prepare the mind for a cordial reception of divine revelation. I freely confess, that I have the advancement of the credit and authority of the holy scriptures deeply at heart. And I know, by above thirty years experience, that our value for those sacred oracles will rise, or fall, in proportion to the sense and conviction

we have of their absolute necessity to our eternal happiness.

I have for a long time observed with sorrow, indignation, and fear, that the credit of the scriptures amongst all ranks of mankind is so exceedingly diminished, as to be almost intirely lost; and if we proceed farther, with that rapid progress into infidelity, which we have done, this nation will soon be plunged into all the darkness of atheism, and then we shall be fully ripened for the reception of the most corrupt religion; \* and become the most depraved in our manners, and sink into the most abject slavery and wretchedness of soul, beyond the power of imagination to conceive.

Indeed, it would be dreadfully just in God, to give us up to that temper, and to those manners, which we have chosen and pursued with such greediness and fury for many years past; and nothing can provoke him to do it sooner, than our neglect and contempt of the holy scriptures.

I trust, every person of common sense, who shall read this contemplation with a fixed attention, and a desire to know the truth, will feel some pungent conviction, that his own reason alone is utterly insufficient to lead him to true and eternal happiness in the fruition of God;

\* Popery.

and



and if this be demonstrated beyond all just and reasonable contradiction, the inference is easily drawn (viz.) that a revelation from God, to direct us how we may know, glorify, and enjoy him for ever, is the greatest blessing that the boundless goodness of our Creator can bestow upon us, and consequently it deserves to be enquired after, with all that eagerness and solicitude which such a favour demands.

Fully convinced of this, I have prosecuted my enquiries with the severest diligence of attention and thought of which I was capable, and the consequence hath been exceedingly pleasing and happy, with respect to myself; and I hope it will be so to the rising generation.

In the conduct of my studies, many years ago, I fixed it as an unalterable rule, that I would take nothing upon trust, but as far as possible see every thing with my own eyes, and feel the truth of every great subject of religion in my own soul, as the result of rational and solid conviction.

As I am fully convinced of the absolute necessity of a divine revelation, so I have enquired with the utmost care and deliberation into the possibility of it, and have proceeded to consider the nature of inspiration, as far as I could attain clear and determinate ideas on such a most delicate and sublime subject.

I have



I have found by happy experience, that if a man have an honest love of truth, a just sense of the defects of his own mind, an humble dependance on God to assist him in laying aside prejudices: and if he proceed with caution and by slow and sure steps, there is no subject in the whole system of truth and religion but what he may investigate, so far as it hath a relation to his duty and happiness.

It is the greatest honour to a human character to be an honest enquirer after truth; and although I will not say I have attained this character: yet I will dare to affirm that I love and admire it, and I wish to possess so great an excellence.

As I write chiefly for my young friends, I will endeavour to give them the outlines of such a character; in order that they may keep it ever before their eyes, and feel a generous ambition to be what they love and revere.

All persons, who devote themselves to the study of religion and the pursuit of learning, profess themselves free enquirers after truth; and rational free-thinkers; but if we try many of them by the true and eternal rules of just free-thinking, we shall find them wanting in all the essential qualities of a true free-thinker; and if my idea of free-thinking be right, we may justly say,  
 “ How few honest and free searchers after truth  
 are

are there to be found in the world? how arduous the labour? how honourable the character?"

A most sincere and honest free-thinker is just the opposite to an infidel, a sceptic, a sophist.—An infidel is not willing that all should be true which God has declared to be true—A sceptic doubts of every thing, and is sure of nothing—A sophist attempts to impose on your understanding the most specious errors in the garb of truth, he deludes you with the shadow instead of the substance of truth—Not so the honest free-thinker: he is just the reverse of such odious and contemptible characters! he is heartily willing that ALL should be true, which God has discovered to be true, whether by reason or revelation——He is resolved to submit to evidence as fast as it shall arise before the eyes of his mind, and he scorns to impose one single thought on mankind, of which he is not fully convinced in his own conscience.

But to possess this glorious character, it is requisite that the soul be illuminated with celestial fire, it must be smitten with the beauties and charms of truth, we must be purified from every species of lust, pride, and extravagant self-love, we must be cured of our boundless self-admiration, and fond desires of a vain distinction, we must be made honest in the very essence and powers of the soul for ever.

A man

A man thus qualified is a generous and upright free-thinker: if you severely examine his internal character you will find in him the following great qualities.

He has an ardent love to truth, merely on account of its excellent nature, beauty, and goodness; he loves it purely for its own sake: an infidel does not; he doth not love truth for its own intrinsic goodness and beauty. The good man fears no consequences that can follow from truth, and therefore he lays open his whole soul to the light of evidence, and is determined to follow where-ever truth shall lead the way.

He is willing from the very bottom of his soul to divest himself of all prejudices, and to put off all opinions and notions, that will not stand the test of a severe and impartial examination.

He is resolved to use all the best helps that God has put in his power, or laid within his reach for the attainment of truth.

He is determined to embrace truth, even all truth, where-ever he meets with it, and from whatsoever hand it comes: whether from a throne or from a dunghill, a palace or a cottage, from a child, a Newton, or a Paul.

He is invariably resolved to buy the truth at any rate and sell it at no price, but will rather part with all that is dear to him in this world, than part with this jewel.—He will give up



his name, his estate, his blood and life, rather than betray or part with the truth. He makes an honest use of his reason to find out truth, or the real nature and relations of things.

He uses his understanding in such modes of operation as these, (viz.) in considering the degree of evidence or clear appearance of truth to the mind——In determining to judge according to the apparent strength or weakness of the evidence before him, on any important question——In ballancing evidence on both sides of a question, and embracing that side, on which the weight of evidence preponderates.

Honest free-thinking gloriously appears in thus considering impartially the nature of the evidence FOR OR AGAINST any point, that is proposed to us as truth.

A man of this spirit and disposition looks upon it as bondage of thought, and the mark of a low slavish soul, to contradict or despise a truth without enquiring into it, merely because it has been commonly received, for a thousand or seventeen hundred years past. Such is the bondage and slavery of soul in all those who contradict or despise the evidences of divine revelation.

True free-thinking does not consist in a power or a right to dissent from the eternal principles of right reason and truth, but in being superior to  
vile



vile bigotry and low prejudices, which imprison and debase the soul.

An honest and generous free-thinker is not attached to any low party or faction in divinity or philosophy, — nor is he a slave to his own vile passions, or to the passions or humours of other men; he scorns to be under the arbitrary will, or the tyrannic pleasure and influence of his superiors, in meer civil power, or worldly honours and emoluments— but truth, eternal, almighty, and all-amiable truth, is the sovereign of his soul, the ravishing empress of his heart. He dedicates himself to truth alone, and aims and wishes to be for ever a disciple to pure and beautiful truth.

The honest free-thinker, guards against the secret and delusive impressions of his most intimate friends, when he has reason for suspicion that they design to allure him out of the road of truth, or draw him from the line of duty. — And he nobly rises above a dread of scorn, and ridicule from his equals or superiors in age, capacity, wealth, genius or learning, when they attempt to allure or affright him from the straight line of truth. — He disdains all shame that may be poured upon him from any quarter, or by any ranks of men, on account of his firm attachment to eternal and IMMUTABLE TRUTH.

The honest free-thinker abhors all pride of his own understanding, he well knows by ten thou-

find sad experiments and mistakes, the weakness of his mind to receive, to retain, and to discern truth; and therefore he looks upon it, as a most detestable folly, a most contemptible vanity, to entertain a haughty conceit of his own reason, a false opinion of the force of his own mind to attain truth, without any special help from God's blessed Spirit, in the course of his studies and pursuits of knowledge.

He avoids a proud affectation of novelty and singularity in his notions, conceptions, expressions, or style—as he does not despise a doctrine, because it is old, and has been believed by millions before he was born; so neither does he scorn a religious education, or the dictates of worthy tutors; nor will he despise even the advice of wise and pious parents, when he is arrived to the maturity of his own understanding.——He does not renounce the best religion in the world, merely because he was born and bred up in the light of it, as many of our proud infidels have done. Would any man, but a fool, or a madman, renounce Euclid's Elements of eternal truth, in geometry, merely because his father was a great mathematician, and had taught his son those elements, when he was a school-boy? No! in geometry and philosophy we have not such swarms of absurd fools, as are to be found amongst

amongst the rejecters and apostates from the christian revelation.

An honest free-thinker, will not suffer himself to be driven from truth by the faults or the foolishness of those that profess it.——He does not forsake REVEALED TRUTH, and leave it bleeding in the dust, on account of sneaking and impure hypocrites, artful impostors, or imperious tyrants, who profess it and disgrace it; and are the curse and bane of the most sacred and beautiful system in the world.

*To conclude this sketch of the beautiful character of an honest free-thinker:*——He disdains the thought of a secret indulgence of sensual lusts, or the foul appetites of the flesh.——He knows that a gratification of all unclean inclinations of his body, are utterly inconsistent with all greatness of soul, and generous freedom of thought.——He looks upon all indulgences of lust and intemperance in meat and drink, as the most vile bondage, and degradation of mind; and therefore rises with a sublime disdain above the body as the grave and dungeon of the soul.

An honest free enquirer after truth scorns to persist in an error, because he has in some things, and at sometimes, made a mistake, or formed a wrong apprehension of some objects.

He is not ashamed nor afraid to say, at such a time, or in such an affair, *“I WAS MISTAKEN.”*

This



This is not the temper of our modern deists, who (having from some *bad springs* rejected divine revelation, and set themselves up as advocates for reason and natural religion alone, their pride prompts them to persist in the way of error) disdain the thought of acknowledging themselves in the wrong.

Not so the true free-thinker, he accounts it a victory to conquer his own pride; and to change an error for truth, he esteems an eternal gain.

I conclude this preface with observing, that the design of the following essay is to pave the way for a dissertation on the Nature of the Inspiration of the sacred Scriptures, and the evidences thereof to a rational enquirer, when this point shall be gained beyond any just objection, our way will be clear into all the beautiful fields of revealed religion. We may then by the help of our gracious God give our Contemplations full scope; we may rise and spread all our powers and affections into the divine perfections, as they shine and harmonize in the person of the Lord Jesus; we may range through his unutterable glories without bounds and without end, and feel an happiness large as our wishes, and lasting as our immortal souls.

I have only to add, that the excellent writings of the great Halyburton have been my chief assistance in the following essay—his incomparable, but almost forgotten and unknown treatise against  
the



the deists, has been the object of my continual attention and study, ever since July 1746, and I am more indebted to him, than to all mankind on this head—The six views of the experience of the world are an extract from him, and the whole is constructed on his plan. I am likewise obliged for many thoughts in one part, to the ingenious Mr. Henry Grove : and in the beginning and the end, I have inserted some excellent thoughts from the judicious Mr. Brine. In fine, I may say, with abundantly greater reason, than the modest and amiable Rollin, “ that provided the thoughts in this essay are true and useful, ’tis no matter whose they are.”

NORTHAMPTON,

June 17, 1775.

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## ERRATA.

- Page 3. line 16. Discoveries.  
 — 10. — 12. Rewards.  
 — 14. — 14. Orations.  
 — 30. — 6. After blind as (*insert*) themselves, and are never sensible of the mistake till sunk where they.

the desire, has been the object of my continual  
attention and study ever since July 1746, and I  
am more in *(Lately published, Price 6d.)*

on this head—The six years of the experience of  
A CONTEMPLATION on the Existence and  
Perfections of GOD drawn from the visible  
World, and from the Powers of the human  
Soul as an Image of the Wisdom, Power, and  
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A CONTEMPLATION on the Nature of In-  
spiration, with a Demonstration of the Rea-  
lity thereof, in the sacred Writings of the  
Old and New Testament. June 1775.

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— 14. — 14. Omissions.  
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— 10. and are never sensible of the mistake  
— 11. till such time they

# CONTEMPLATION

## ON THE

## INSUFFICIENCY OF REASON.

THE INSUFFICIENCY OF REASON TO GIVE PROPER  
DISCOVERIES CONCERNING GOD AND HIS INFINITE  
PERFECTIONS.—THE TRUE MANNER OF WORSHIP-  
ING GOD.—THE SUPREME GOOD OF MAN.—THE  
PERFECT RULE OF MORALITY.—THE MOST POW-  
ERFUL MOTIVES TO VIRTUE AND RELIGION.—  
THE PARDON OF SIN.—THE REFINEMENT OF THE  
SOUL BY SANCTIFICATION.—SUPPORT UNDER THE  
AFFLICTIONS AND TROUBLES OF LIFE.—AND,  
CONSOLATIONS AGAINST THE STINGS AND TER-  
RORS OF DEATH.

**R**EASON is the power of discerning the truth  
of some things, and the falshood of other  
things.

The human soul has an essential property of discern-  
ing that all things are not alike true, nor alike good,  
fit and beautiful.

Reason has this property essential to its existence and  
nature, and without which it cannot be.

B

Reason



Reason in man cannot be equally capable of assenting to truth and error in the full compass of both.

'Tis impossible that reason should do so, either in men or devils.

If it is, there can be no ground to argue from the absurdity of any principle, for the truth of its contrary.

I. REASON ALONE, IN ITS PRESENT STATE, CANNOT DISCOVER GOD SO CLEARLY AND SO FULLY TO MAN, AS TO ENABLE HIM TO FORM AFFECTIONATE APPREHENSIONS OF GOD, AND EXCITE MAN TO LOVE AND ADORE HIM, AND ENJOY HIS VITAL AND BLISSFUL PRESENCE FOR EVER.

1. Reason cannot give us easy and plain notices of a God.

Reason, in the Pagan world, never did furnish such familiar ideas of the being, presence, power, and wisdom of God, as were clear to the weakest mind, affecting to the most stupid heart, and suitable to the meanest understanding.

2. Reason cannot give special and distinct ideas of God, in such a manner, as to enable the soul in a moment to distinguish God from all other objects in the universe, and give him that distinguishing veneration which his dignity requires.

3. Reason is unable to give us certain and convincing notices of a God, so as to oblige the mind to assent to the truth of God's existence, convince it of the reality of the divine perfections, impress the conscience with a sense of the divine justice, and persuade the will to submit to the divine dominion.

4. Reason



4. *Reason cannot give extensive ideas and large apprehensions of God* in all his natural and moral perfections; nor is it able to discover all the natural and moral relations of God to our souls, so that we may be sure that no idea of God is wanting which is necessary to our real duty and final happiness.

5. *Reason is unable to give pleasant and lovely ideas of God*, such as shall suit a rational taste, and excite a tender affection to him as an amiable and good being, full of perfect beauty and love, good and beautiful in himself, fit to do us the highest good, worthy to receive all possible good from us: an object in whom we may expand our noblest powers with delight; a being that rejoices to do us good, and fill us with happiness for ever.—Reason can never furnish such sweet and satisfying discourses of a God as shall set our hearts at rest, and be the termination of our will and reason in God, so as to have no occasion to seek any farther felicity to eternity.

6. *Reason, in its present weak and depraved state, cannot give such powerful and durable ideas of God*, as shall always abide with great force upon the soul.—Reason cannot discern such an energy of God working from moment to moment, and renewing the impetus every instant on the conscience, passions, and will of man, and yet such an impression is absolutely necessary for man's duty and happiness.—Here Reason discovers its utter weakness and insufficiency.

It is absolutely necessary, in order that a man should know God, and perform his whole duty to him, that he should have such a rational and incessant impression of God upon his soul, as shall have a sufficient force to

influence every man in the world to a compliance with every duty, in every instant, in every circumstance and state of life, from youth to manhood, from manhood to old-age, and from old-age to the very moment of death.

## II. REASON CANNOT DIRECT US IN THE TRUE MANNER OF PERFORMING THE SOLEMN WORSHIP OF GOD,

Worship consists in a just sense and acknowledgment of his infinite perfections; and this acknowledgment and veneration must be regulated by the divine will, and not by the mere fancy of the worshipper.—How can mere reason assure us that we have clear and lively apprehensions of God's nature and attributes? and a proper veneration for his infinite majesty and dignity? Can reason infuse into us a keen abhorrence of all moral disorder, and inspire us with a powerful confidence of God's goodness and fidelity? Can reason produce in us a most intense love to God, and a vigorous joy in him as our life and felicity?

Reason can never produce in us a sweet and easy resignation of our will to God.—Reason will never inspire us with a sweet humility, nor make us truly grateful for every favour bestowed upon us.—Reason cannot enable us to exercise a resolute self-denial, or bear afflictions with a good grace, when God demands the one, and brings on the other.—Reason alone will never inspire us with a most mighty zeal for the honour and glory of God.—Reason can never enable us to act with wisdom before God, nor will it make us honest

ness to the very bottom of our being in his service and interest.—Reason will never inspire us with an ardent desire after an eternal fruition of his glorious perfections.

### III. REASON CAN NEVER DISCOVER THE TRUE HAPPINESS OF MAN.

Reason cannot discern that good which makes a man happy, or prepares him for happiness, or prevents his pain or removes his misery.—Reason cannot discern wherein true happiness consists.—Reason knows not that good which is suited to our highest powers, and is agreeable to every situation and every character we can sustain.—Reason cannot discern that good which may be enjoyed without shame and confusion, possessed without suspicion of wrong conduct, or dread of future ill consequences.—Reason cannot discern that good which will support us under the troubles and vexations of life, or that may refine or ravish our affections, stand the severe test of sober reflection, improve upon longer experience, afford the highest pleasure on the most frequent repetition, and be as lasting as our existence.

### IV. REASON CANNOT DISCERN A COMPLETE BODY OF MORALS OR UNIVERSAL VIRTUE, AS THE MEANS OF HAPPINESS.

Reason never did give us a complete body of morality without defect or darkness.—A perfect scheme of morality must be easy and clear, in order to be useful



to man—A confused and indeterminate rule of duty is of no use—A sound plan of morals must be universal to oppose every sin, and urge to every duty—There must be nothing defective, nothing corrupt or vicious in the whole system—Sound morality must have no pernicious maxim to draw after it any bad consequences—This plan must be avowed by God himself as a rule of duty, and enforced by his authority—Reason leaves poor blind man to draw the rule of duty from the source of his own nature—Man cannot frame a complete body of morality—He could make no progress in a system of morals of his own, while he is a raw weak youth full of impure appetites and passions—If clear rules could be found out, motives would be wanting—If motives were discerned by man, even then assistances of light, warmth, and strength would be wanting, and we should freeze to ice amidst maxims of wisdom, and motives to virtue.

#### V. REASON CANNOT DISCOVER ANY POWERFUL AND EFFECTUAL MOTIVES TO VIRTUE.

1. *Reason cannot give us a full view of the immediate presence of the lawgiver, and the infinite authority of his laws, as the invariable rule of obedience—Reason is unable to recommend the law, by shewing us the glorious qualifications of the lawgiver in his power and greatness—It cannot give us right notions of his wisdom, justice, goodness and clemency; and yet the discoveries of these glorious properties must be attained, in order to promote universal and genuine virtue—Reason cannot give such a clear evidence of God from*  
 moment

moment to moment, as may strike strongly, affect warmly, and have a lively impression and pungent influence to quicken us to the practice of virtue.

Reason cannot shew us that our Governor is always near, that he is every moment conversant with us; that we have every day convincing and delightful evidences of his goodness, wisdom, justice, and kindness, with all other beautiful perfections fitting him for government. These notices are absolutely necessary to enforce a regard to the will of God.

Reason cannot powerfully excite unto obedience, by shewing us that the lawgiver's title is indisputable, and the ground of his claim to our affection clearly made known. Such is the transcendent excellence of God's nature, as renders him the only fit being to govern, but Reason is blind to this excellence. Reason doth not clearly discern that God is the creator of all things, that he has a propriety in all his creatures. Reason is blind as to God's preserving us in being, as to his special care and inspection into our existence, and the many precious benefits he has bestowed upon us—All this close influence of God upon us from moment to moment, is basely disregarded by the unenlightened mind.

Reason is unable to give us a clear and satisfying discovery of God's concernment in his own laws, i. e. that the God who is thus qualified for, and rightly possessed of, the government, has made such laws, and stamped his authority upon them.

Reason is incapable of forming great and venerable ideas of the excellency of God, and his right to give laws. But if we had brighter apprehensions of his  
dignity

dignity and right to govern, yet this would have no weight with us if we were not clearly satisfied that the laws of nature are the laws of God.

Reason is unable to discern that the laws of God, in the nature and contents of them, are fully agreeable to the glorious perfections we desire in a lawgiver; such as wisdom, justice, goodness, and clemency, or kind affection to man. But as these perfections are either not known, or obscurely known by the light of reason, so the impress of the attributes of God on the laws of nature has not been discovered by the best geniuses of the Pagan world; nor is it discoverable by our blind reason. No truth in the world is more certain; we not only dare affirm it, but we can clearly make it appear even to demonstration, viz. that the frame of the universe, and the whole system of the laws of nature, are adapted to the powers and passions of man in a state of innocence and rectitude; which is not the case with man now: for this is far from being his present state.

And therefore how to reconcile the perfect laws to the most rational apprehensions of God, and the present state of man, is an incomprehensible speculation of infinite consequence, and of the most prodigious difficulty, so that human reason never could have got through it: its utmost force could never have surmounted it; the whole united world of minds could never have solved the difficulty, if God had given us no other guide than reason or the light of nature.

Reason cannot give a certain knowledge that God has a great regard to his laws, and accurately inspects whether or no these laws are observed and obeyed.

The



The knowledge of this would be a strong inducement to us to regard his laws ; here Reason likewise fails.

Reason in this respect, is no less in the dark than in other points of the utmost importance.

The face of things in the world hath so contrary and horrid an appearance, that we never could see clearly through this difficult matter, if we were left to judge of God and his laws by the mere light of nature.

The aboundings of sin in all parts of the globe.—

The temporal prosperity of millions of sinners.—

The sufferings of the best men, and the afflicted state of the most virtuous, have led multitudes to deny the providence and government of God ; and many of the wiser and better sort of mankind have felt the most painful doubts concerning the wisdom and rectitude of the divine administration.

Reason cannot draw forth our best powers into action ; the inducements to obedience must shine with the brightest light and ardour, so as to illuminate and fire the mind, and not only dissipate our doubts concerning the will and dominion of God, but likewise shew the excellency of submission, and the beauty and pleasure of humble and faithful obedience.

Man is so strangely tossed between hope and fear by the goodness and justice of God's providential government, that he cannot by the force of reason come to any certain conclusion what God will do with him in time and eternity.

Rational men are astonished to see God so patiently bear the most wicked insults on his law. At other times, they are filled with the most alarming fears at

the terrible effects of his punishing justice. The reason of the divine government in the exertions of patience, and punishments, are absolutely impenetrable by the force of reason, and bid defiance to the greatest acuteness and sagacity.

On these tossings between hope and fear, read the nervous Halyburton, page 144, and the great John Maclaurin on Glorifying in the Cross, page 68.

II. REASON IS DEFECTIVE IN A SECOND MOTIVE TO DUTY; it doth not clearly discern the present pleasures of obedience, nor satisfy us with respect to the present purposes of virtue. Reason cannot produce in us such a serious and delightful sense of God in the soul, nor impress upon us such a feeling conviction of our intire dependance upon him, and obligations to him, as shall excite us to love him with a lively gratitude, zealously promote his glory, and proclaim to the utmost of our capacity the excellence of his perfections.

I. *Reason is unable to discern the certainty and evidence of a virtuous and religious life.* Man without divine aid cannot discern and know that he is always in the right; he cannot see his way clear, and his end sure. The way of his duty will be always perplexed; he will be ever without clear true light—that light which produces a lively conviction and rest of mind in a course of obedience. Man, by the force of reason, cannot be absolutely sure that he desires to obey the whole of God's will, nor attain to satisfaction that he sincerely endeavours to please God. Man, by mere reason, cannot be sure that the path he walks in is the path of eternal life and happiness: the way of mere reason is covered

covered with so much darkness, that he cannot see all through to the end. His prospect is obscure; and eternal objects are so confused before him, that he cannot discover where his path ends; he cannot conclude that it will terminate in God.

2. *Reason, in its present state, cannot clearly and steadily discover the great beauty and excellence of a religious and virtuous life.* There is nothing more lovely than light in the whole creation of God, nothing more needful or useful. Light is not a greater natural beauty in the material world, than virtue is a moral beauty in the rational world. True virtue is the beauty of human life, the splendor and glory of human actions. Virtue is that active principle by which our whole mind and heart are intentionally directed to produce good towards all the objects of our free agency in heaven and earth.

But how blind has human reason, in all ages, been to this beauty of temper and action——this most lovely quality and ornament of soul!

3. *Mere reason cannot afford that light which will inspire the pleasures and joys of a virtuous life.* To have the eyes of reason opened, and the understanding brightly illuminated, what a rapture and pleasing surprise must it be! how new, how beautiful, how charming must every object appear! But reason cannot furnish these pleasures. Reason utterly fails in giving us the pleasures of moral perception, of religious actions, of virtuous reflection, pure fruition, and the hope of future happiness in perfection.

1. *Reason cannot supply the pleasures of virtuous action.*  
——All pleasure supposes action——God has made



man an active being, so that idleness is its own torment—God has so framed man, that the best pleasures always attend the best actions—Every good action is pleasant—And the better the action is, the more pleasant.

Pleasures flowing from bad actions are of a low fordid nature; the divine wisdom only suffers some mean dreggy pleasures to attend vicious actions, on purpose to put the powers of reason to the proof. Vicious pleasures are hollow and unsatisfying; they are momentary and soon gone; they are attended with fear of bad consequences, with a painful suspicion of wrong conduct; they sicken us with frequent repetition, and are bitter and tormenting on the review—Mere reason can furnish us with no pleasure that will wait on every step of human life. The life of a man that has nothing more than reason to conduct him, has many barren spots in which no pleasures grow.

Reason alone can never raise us to that sublime devotion to God which is the most rapturous exercise of the human soul. It can never inspire us with just and enlarged ideas of the divine perfections, nor impress upon us the divine image, and give us a happy warmth and flow of affection to the First and best Cause of all things.

2. *Reason alone cannot enable us to enjoy the sweet pleasures of reflection after a good action is done.*—This is a rich privilege indeed! but reason cannot bestow it. A truly good man can enjoy the time past as well as the time present. The time past is gone; considered as a part of duration, in this sense it can never be recalled. But time, as filled with good actions, is never lost, while

while memory and recollection remain. But as reason is insufficient to excite us to good actions, so consequently it can furnish no pleasing reflections on our past conduct.

3. *Reason alone can never furnish the pleasures of exquisite fruition of the presence and love of God.* A poor depraved man's time is worse than lost; he has no fruit but the fruit of a vitiated heart, no good fruit at all——yet must give an account to God of every word, thought and talent. Vice, which allures the wretch with an harlot's face, now viewed behind, is a cursed hag, an ill-favoured sorceress——Conscience turns his enraged enemy, and torments his very soul.

If man was truly good, reflection would prove a rich, wonderful, and delightful faculty. By the help of this wondrous power, things past may be made present to the mind, and it may be made an inlet to very great and sincere pleasures. If a man was truly good, his life would be spent in innocence and usefulness; he would feel a pleasure that he could repeat a thousand times over; and the more exquisite, in that, while it rose from time past, it would run on into time future, and terminate in a vast eternity. On the other hand, the pains of fruition in sin and vice are far beyond all its pleasures.

4. *Reason can never furnish the pleasures of hope and trust in God for all future time.* It can never enable us to enjoy the future duration of the next life in the present. If a man was truly good, hope would grow up into a kind of assurance; it would fix the soul on a rock, and fortify the mind in the prospect of ill, that God would not forsake us; it would teach a man to  
say,

say, I fix my confidence in infinite presence, infinite power, infinite faithfulness, and infinite love.—I am resolutely fixed on God; I have new desires and vast expectations. Thus time past, present, and to come, would all conspire in the pleasures of religion and virtue. But where is the man to be found in the whole world, that by the mere force of reason can feel these hopes and these pleasures?

(4.) *Reason is unable to exhibit the alluring and instructive nature of a religious and virtuous life.*

Light allures and attracts the eyes of all men. The light of virtue in a good man is the most instructive and attractive in the whole world; it vastly excels all the finest ornaments in favour of virtue. The light and life which vital virtue diffuses all round it, would invite other men into the same path, and guide them to pursue with ardour the same practice. But where is the man to be found that, on the principle of reason alone hath exhibited this beautiful example? The light and beauty of a virtuous conversation is more convincing than the mere light of good principles, or the eloquence of the best orators.

It is above all other methods of promoting true virtue in the world.

A shining light instructs, an ardent light burns, a beautiful light persuades the passions of the heart, and excites imitation; but where is such a shining, ardent, and beautiful light to be found on the principles of reason?

5. *Reason is unable to make an high advancement in the power and beauty of virtue.* True religion ought to be

of



of a progressive nature. Vital virtue should resemble the advancing light of the rising sun.

As the sun rises higher and higher toward the meridian, so a truly virtuous man should be still advancing in goodness. Internal virtue should urge him on, by a rational and forcible stimulus, to a farther growth in knowledge, perfection, and usefulness. — But here the powers of unassisted reason utterly fail.

1. *A truly virtuous man ought to improve his knowledge of God and himself.* He will strive to advance in clearer apprehensions of the infinite perfections of his Maker. His conceptions of the dignity of God, and of the powers and affections of his own soul, will be more vivid and distinct, his mind will be more free from pride and haughtiness, his reason more free from error, his judgment more purged from prejudices, and more direct in its decisions. But where is the man to be found in the whole world that is capable of these noble advancements on the principles of reason?

2. *Reason is unable to produce a fixed adhesion of the will to God and virtue: it cannot give us strength and firmness in true religion.*

An adhesion of the will to God is properly the strength of virtue. If reason were sufficient for man's happiness, we should find a natural progress in the life of virtue; and this adhesion of the will to the goodness, rectitude, and beauty of God, would grow stronger with time, so as to bear a proportion with the growing apprehensions of God, and the enlarged views of the human understanding. There is a great degree of strength in the union of the will to God, and in this union true virtue consists. But did reason alone ever  
produce

produce it? A soul that truly feels it, hopes to have the approbation of God before the whole rational world—But reason can neither produce nor cherish this hope.

3. *Reason cannot excite us to that sublime virtue as shall enable a man to shine in the perfection of his example and character.*

A man of true virtue will go on to higher degrees of beauty and perfection. He has fewer blemishes than other men, and fewer than himself once had—He is more purified from the vices of flesh and spirit—He corrects whatever is amiss in his temper and conduct—His example was formerly good; but it is now much brighter and better, more lovely and instructive. The man of high and delicate virtue labours about his example and character, as a painter doth upon a picture, or a statuary, on a piece of first-rate sculpture; and before he finishes his piece, he strives to give a beauty to the whole, and to spread a grace over his whole character. But we challenge the whole world to produce one man that hath done this on the mere principles of reason.

4. *Reason can never enable a man to advance sweetly in the ease and pleasure of virtuous action, and increase in the high-spirited joy of well doing.*

A man of true virtue will find, to his unspeakable pleasure, that he advances in facility of action—He will find the pleasure of right conduct still increasing—He will feel his faculties more and more adapted to actions of generous greatness, and the pleasures of social benevolence. By a kind of divine and god-like instinct, he will run naturally into worthy manners  
and

and practices——Whilst a wicked man will make a swift progressive motion into all the plagues and miseries of vice. Where is the man who, on the principles of mere reason hath pursued the former, and avoided the latter?

6. *Reason alone is unable to carry any man into such purity of heart, and life, as shall at last issue in a state of perfection in the full fruition of God.* The perfection of virtue, in the order and operations of our noblest powers and affections, would certainly be the result of a rich advance in perfect goodness——But here reason eternally fails.

Human reason, in its present state, is utterly unable to guide us to that perfection of happiness in God, and that rich enjoyment of the whole soul, in all its principles and powers of fruition, which our nature appears to be designed for in its original constitution.

And as reason is defective in this second motive, (*viz.*) it cannot display in a lively and convincing manner the present advantages and pleasures of virtue and obedience. So we affirm that

III. REASON IS DEFECTIVE IN A THIRD MOTIVE TO DUTY; (*viz.*) It doth not give us a clear and striking view of FUTURE rewards and pleasures to repay or recompence us for all present disadvantages and hardships we suffer for the sake of God and virtue.

IV. REASON IS DEFECTIVE IN A FOURTH MOTIVE TO VIRTUE; (*viz.*) It cannot discover in a clear and striking manner those terrible punishments which God will most surely execute on all resolute and determin'd rebels against his government.——

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V. REASON



**V. REASON IS DEFECTIVE IN A FIFTH MOTIVE TO VIRTUE; (viz.)** It cannot shew us one example of pure and spotless virtue in the whole world of mankind.

Examples move to action, precepts only teach: laws and precepts only instruct us what ought to be done—But reason can neither furnish precepts or examples to excite effectually one man to vital virtue.

**VI. REASON IS DEFECTIVE IN A SIXTH MOTIVE AND MEANS TO VIRTUE; (viz.)** It cannot discover the least assistance from God for the great work of obedience to God, or benevolence to mankind.

Thus far we have shewn the utter insufficiency of reason, to make proper discoveries of God and his infinite perfections—To point out the true manner of worshipping God—To shew the supreme good or true happiness of man—To discover a perfect rule of morality or plan of sound virtue and morals—And to discern the most powerful motives to virtue and religion—We now proceed to shew that reason cannot discover the pardon of sin,—The refinement of the soul by sanctification—Support under troubles, and comfort in death.

**VI. REASON IS UNABLE TO DISCOVER THE PARDON OF SIN.**

**1. Reason cannot discern the estimate which God made of the first act of sin, nor how he treated the first parents of mankind after their act of treason and rebellion.**

**2. Reason**

2. Reason could never discover the least institution of a propitiatory offering to atone for the guilt of sin, or to intimate the way in which God would be propitious to a rebel.

3. Reason is unable to discern God inviting and alluring men to repentance, it can discover no command of God to repent—The light of nature shews God is angry, but it shews no command to repent.

4. Reason cannot discover one sinner pardoned from the beginning of the world to this very hour.

5. Reason is unable to discern the great design of God's patience towards a wicked world for thousands of years—This is an incomprehensible conduct in God which no sagacity of man can account for and solve.

6. Reason is insufficient to shew us any happy souls bursting into songs of praise for pardon from God as a merciful being.

7. Reason can discover no holy and spiritual worship appointed by God for any of his rebellious creatures, nor does it assure us that any worship will be acceptable to him: no worship at all is commanded by God on the foot of reason: this is an awful thought, viz. that God commands no man to worship, nor exhorts or commands any man to repent and return to God.

8. Reason can never discover one purpose in the HEART of God, nor one promise in the MOUTH of God, nor one action in the CONDUCT of God, that gives a sure and certain indication of the pardon of one sin—much less can it discern ten thousand promises and actions bursting from the heart of God in streams of light and love upon lost mortals.

9. Reason cannot discover one name belonging to God that inspires a solid hope of pardon.

10. Reason can never discover one perfection in God, that can pardon——It never possibly can discern the harmony of justice and mercy in the pardon of *one sin* in the whole world.

The united reason and wisdom of all mankind, can never discover how justice and mercy may be shewn in the same moment to a criminal in civil government. This thought deserves to be amplified and urged to the utmost.

11. Reason is not in the least able to discover a proper provision for a divine and infinite Governor, to the end that he may pardon sin with honour of the moral character and government of God.

It can discern——No price to a divine and infinite conqueror——No sacrifice or atonement to a divine and injured monarch——No satisfaction in the least to a divine and infinite judge.

Reason can discover no friend to us, who could by the dispositions of his heart, and by his actions and sufferings provide for the full meridian glory of divine justice——As making laws——As rewarding obedience to laws——As punishing the violation of laws in the most perfect manner, and thus [kindly obeying] all the righteous commands and bearing all the righteous curses of the law, which it otherwise required of us in order to escape punishment, and our having a right to eternal happiness in God.

Concerning all this reason is at an inexpressible loss.

12. Reason



12. Reason cannot discover one man sent by God to proclaim one word of pardon to a guilty world.

Not any one man, nor any set of men can be discovered by reason as sent with a commission from God, and sealed with the broad seal of heaven, to proclaim so much as a single hint of pardon to a guilty world, or to any one single soul on earth one moment through thousands of years. We defy all mankind to deny this and prove the contrary.

13. Reason is not able to discover God issuing out any commands to rebels to forgive one another the crimes they commit against each other, and the offences they give to one another.

No man can discern God's orders in a single instance, to forgive his fellow creatures their offences, no not in one instance for a moment—Hence see the horrid spirit of revenge amongst the high blooded heroes of the heathen world.

VII. REASON IS UTTERLY INSUFFICIENT TO SUPPRESS AND ROOT OUT VICIOUS INCLINATIONS FROM THE SOUL, AND REFINE AND PURIFY THE HEART BY A POWERFUL AND EFFECTUAL SANCTIFICATION.

How blind was the heathen world, how dark their wisest philosophers, how childish and silly are all the best means they prescribe: Plato bids you purify your souls by music and the mathematics.

Can a fiddle charm down lust? Can Euclid's Elements subdue your pride, uncleanness and adultery, your avarice, malice and rash anger?

2. Reason

Reason cannot produce and cherish any of those noble and excellent qualities in the soul which are necessary for a life of virtue and holiness.

1. A vigorous bent of the mind or a powerful and ardent inclination and propensity of heart to virtue, is necessary to the practice of it.—But here reason utterly fails.

All mankind have an actual bent and propensity of heart to evil, moral evil or vice and wickedness.

2. A cordial peace and heart-felt friendship with God, is absolutely necessary to a life of vital virtue and sanctification in the sight of God.

Nothing less than a strong sense of peace with God can produce an earnest desire after a resemblance to God.—But here reason with all its united powers utterly fails.

3. A sufficiency of strength and light from God, is absolutely necessary for a life of holiness towards God and conformity to his image or moral perfections; to be like God in wisdom, a man must be wise; to resemble his goodness, a man must be good at heart; to bear the likeness of his holiness, a man must be purified and refined in the temper of his soul; to resemble God's justice and truth, a man must be impressed with a sense of the beauty of justice, and be filled with sincerity and integrity of heart.—But did meer reason ever do this? Where is the man to be found? In what age, in what country did he live, that performed all this by the power of reason alone.

4. A lively hope of being happy in the presence of God to eternity is absolutely necessary to a life of genuine virtue in the present world.

Without

Without this vigorous hope, no man on earth will ever practice universal virtue.—This love to God and all mankind.—And where is this man to be found who on the principles of reason alone ever pursued and practised universal virtue? where was he born? where was he educated? where did he live? No answer can be given! our infidels are struck dumb for ever, they cannot for their lives and souls give us a satisfactory answer to these queries, consequently their scheme of infidelity is ruined; and if they had any moral honesty in their hearts they would openly declare and confess it before the whole world.

For a rational creature in his present state, and with all the prodigious imperfections of his internal character to look for an eternity of happiness in God, is to look very high indeed, it is to form very grand and exalted conceptions and hopes; and it is demonstrably and undoubtedly certain, that no man in the world will go to the expence of denying all his vile appetites and passions after present good, without a strong sensation of invisible and eternal good, to reward him for his self denial, and the resolute practice of pure and perfect virtue.—Now I ask again, where is the man to be found that has preserved in his bosom an high hope of the eternal fruition of God as the supreme good, and on this principle has denied every bad appetite, every polluted passion, every impure inclination, and has exerted all his powers in love to God and to all mankind? There is no such man to be found in the whole world.—He is yet to be born.

Reason cannot discover the true and only source of holiness.—Nor the foundation on which it is enjoyed,  
viz.



viz. a union of heart with God.—Reason cannot discover the method and order of holiness.—Nor the means of holiness.—Consolations of God.—Good and bright examples.—Nor the grand efficient of holiness, or sanctification, the holy and eternal Spirit of God.—Nor the grand secret of living to God, by a new constitution of soul.—Nor the right use of all the means of increasing holiness.—Nor the beauty, the rich advantages, and pleasures of holiness in time and eternity.—Reason cannot give any solid comfort from God for one moment to enable us to perform the duties of his reasonable, just, and good law.

#### VIII. REASON CANNOT SUPPORT US UNDER THE TROUBLES AND BITTER AFFLICTIONS OF THIS LIFE.

Reason can give no sufficient relief to the mind under any troubles, trials, or pinching and critical times of distress.—Reason cannot discover any certain supplies in want.—Reason cannot discover God's providence taking special notice of any one man, having a care for sparrows, or numbering the hairs of our head.—Reason knows not that God has any one friend in all the world.—Reason cannot discover one angel in the universe to take any care of us.—Reason can discover no promise of God, no, not the utmost exertion of reason can tell that God has ever made one promise or ever will to eternity.—Reason knows not that God has any people on earth or in heaven.—Reason knows of no true and pure holiness and righteousness on earth, it can only shew you a parcel of loathsome rags, smear-

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ed with the putrid ulcers of rotten finners souls——  
Reason knows not the Son of God, it cannot form one  
thought of him, it cannot tell that God has a Son——  
Reason is stone blind about a Saviour——Reason knows  
not the Spirit of God, that God's Spirit has any exist-  
ence, that God has an eternal Spirit——Reason finds  
eternity all in horrid darkness. Even blackness of dark-  
ness——Reason knows not a word of heaven, an eter-  
nal heaven with all its gold and jewels are totally  
unknown——Reason is totally blind about God's  
kingdom in our world, or in the world to come——  
Reason can discern nothing but eternal beggary and  
poverty——Reason is blind to all God's salvations of  
every kind——Reason is ignorant of assurances of in-  
terest in God——Reason has no discernment or expe-  
rience of God's special favor and faithfulness in the least  
idea or thought——Reason knows of no sweetness in  
God our Savior and Redeemer——Reason cries, if the  
sweetness of the world is lost, all is lost to me for ever  
——Reason knows not that there is any drop of love  
in God for one soul——Reason is blind concerning the  
true and solid usefulness of afflictions, trials, troubles,  
and distresses in life——It cannot discern their use to  
the souls of men, nor can it make all troubles work  
for good——Reason can give no fear-nots ; it knows  
not a word or a syllable of any fear-not from the voice  
of God——Reason is totally at a loss as to all final and  
happy issues of our affairs with God, at our ending  
scenes of life——Reason is deaf as death to all notices of  
God's oath, life, soul, arm, and consolations to sinners  
and penitent rebels——Reason cannot give a lively and  
strong apprehension of the weight and worth of eternal

good—Reason cannot impress on the soul a sweet sense of happiness—It can give no prospect of heaven—It cannot infuse the least taste for heaven—It cannot inspire the least sense of the sweetness, reality, and solidity of invisible things—Reason knows nothing of the appearances of God—Nothing of the last state of the universe and empire of God—Nothing of his singular and free interpositions in our favor, either for time or eternity—All is dark ! dark ! dark ! dark as death.

**IX. REASON CANNOT SUPPORT US IN THE AGONIES OF DEATH, NOR ARM US AGAINST ITS APPROACHES AND ITS TERRORS.**

Reason hates to think of death, it flies from it as the terrible of all terrors—Reason fondly promises a long life—Reason looks to second causes to preserve life, (viz.) physicians, diet, exercise—Reason clings to this world and the present life, as a bird to the lime-twigs—Reason cannot enable and excite any man to forsake the inward love of sin, which makes death so dreadful—Nor wean and divorce him from the power of a lustful taste and impure desires—Reason cannot inspire us with a calm repose on God's tender care, or encourage a confidence in his love—Reason can give no consolations against the terrors of death—Reason cannot discover that God will live with us and abide by us for one moment in life or death, we are such sorry guilty wretches—Reason has no right to dare to call God Father, in its present depraved and guilty state—Reason has not one idea of a friendly Mediator between



tween God and us—Reason cannot tell that Christ is either dead or alive, or that he has any existence, or ever had any—Reason knows not a word of the incarnation, sufferings, resurrection or ascension of Christ—Reason is absolutely blind concerning union with God's heart and love for a poor lost soul, a vile sinner—It never could start a thought of union with Christ as a living head—Reason if it speaks out the clear truth, must terribly tell us that death is the door to all evils, the passage into a world of horrors—Reason if it tells the whole truth will curse every man to eternal sinfulness, and assure him that sin shall never, never, leave him, no, no, nor ever forsake his filthy wretched soul—Reason knows of no happiness after death, no, not for one soul in all the world—Reason knows nothing of a resurrection of our dead bodies—It has not one thought of it—Corrupt reason, scorns the least notices of it—It disdains to receive any news of the resurrection—It scoffs at any man as a mad fool, and a babbling fellow, who shall speak one word about it—Reason if it speaks out the whole truth concerning every sinner, must conclude on our eternal separation from God, without any hope of his favor.

**X. OF THE INSUFFICIENCY OF REASON TO LEAD US TO ETERNAL HAPPINESS—ARISING FROM A SIX-FOLD GENERAL VIEW OF THE WHOLE WORLD.**

As a conclusion to, and illustration of what has hitherto been discoursed for demonstrating the insufficiency of natural religion, I shall here offer a six-fold view of the experience of the world in general, without de-

scending to particular instances, which have in part been touched at, and offered before, and are every where to be met with.

1. Let us view man as a creature made for this end, TO GLORIFY GOD AND ENJOY HIM FOR EVER : Abstracted from the consideration of his corruption, which the deists sometimes deny, and sometimes with difficulty do but in part admit.—And let us consider him as left to pursue this noble end, in the use of his rational faculties under the conduct of the meer light of nature. If we consider him thus, and enquire into the experience of the world, how far he has reached this end, we shall find such an account as will much confirm the truth we have hitherto asserted and weaken the credit of the deists, their imaginary sufficiency of nature's light to conduct men to the end for which he was made.

If we look to the vulgar, the generality of mankind, we shall find them in a posture much like that wherein the prophet saw the princes in the vision, with their backs to the chief end, never once thinking for what they were made, pursuing other things : every one, as lust led him, following his own humor, walking in a direct and open contradiction to that law, which was originally designed for the guide of our life, and the directory to bliss, that happiness which all would have, though they know not where to find it.

If we look at the philosophers, we may see them fitting up late, rising early, eating the bread of carefulness, wearying themselves in the search of happiness, running into some hundreds of different notions about it ; and yet not one of them hitting, or at least understanding

standing the true one. And as little agreed about the way to it. We may hear them talk of virtue, but never levelling it at its proper end, the glory of God. We may hear them urging its practice, but not upon the proper grounds. Rarely any regard to the authority of God, the only formal ground of obedience. Instead of plain rules useful to mankind, they obtrude cryptick and dark sentences, rather designed to make others admire them, than to be useful to any. They every where tack their own fancies to the divine law, a weight sufficient to sink the other, as to its truth, in the apprehensions of men, or at least, as to its usefulness. They offer a rule defective in most things of moment; corrupt in many, ruining in not a few instances, destitute of any other authority, than their own say so, or, *ipse dixit*, unintelligible to the vulgar, and naked as to inducements to obey it.

2. Let us consider man as made for this end; but barred from its attainment, by the interposition of those great hinderances and rubs which now are certainly in its way; I mean DARKNESS, GUILT, and CORRUPTION. There are stones in the way. How has nature's light acquitted itself as to the rolling them away. Truly they have been like Syfiphus's stone, as fast as they have roll'd them up as fast they have recoiled, and fallen back on them.

As to that DARKNESS that has overspread the minds of men; if we look at the vulgar, we find them like blind men, content to jog on in the dark, mired every where, stumbling frequently, and falling sometimes dangerously; yet satisfied with their case, not looking after light: not so much because they want it not, as  
because



because they have no notion of it, or its usefulness ; like blind men that never saw the sun, and therefore suffer the loss of it with less regret, than they who once saw, but now have lost their eyes. They follow as they are led ; are ready to take hold of any hand, though of one as blind as cannot get out again. The philosophers indeed seem a little more sensible of their case, and fancying truth hid in Democritus's well, dive for it, but loose their breath before they come at it, and fall into dangerous eddys or whirlpools, where they loose themselves instead of finding truth ; or trying to fetch it up, but with a line too short, they fetch up some weeds that are nourished by their nearness to the waters, and please themselves with those. After all their painful endeavors we find them groping in the dark, as to all useful and necessary knowledge of God, or the way of worshipping him ; of ourselves, our happiness, our sins, the way of obtaining pardon, our duty, or our corruption.

As to GUILT ; if we look at the case of mankind, and his endeavors for the removal of it, we find the vulgar drowned in endless despair, or fatal security ; like men at their wits end, trying all ways that fear, superstition, or racked imagination can supply and still unsatisfied with their own inventions, they are ready to try all ways that self-designing men, or even the devil can suggest to them, sparing no cost, no travel, no pain. They stand not to give the fruit of their body for the sin of their soul. The philosophers either think through their pride, they have no sin, because they are not so bad, quite so bad as the vulgar ; or, if they still retain some sense of sin, they are driven into the utmost perplexity,

plexity, being convinced of the wickedness of the measures taken by the vulgar, or at least, of their uselessness and impertinency, and yet unable to find out better; they try to divert their thoughts from a sore they know no plaister for.

As to CORRUPTION; we find all confessing it, crying out of the disease; and indeed it's rather because it will not be hid, for the sore runs, than because it's painful to many. The vulgar despair of stemming the tide, finding it easiest to swim with the stream, are willingly carried headlong. The body of philosophers are indeed like weak watermen on a strong stream, they look one way, but are carried another. Though they pretend they aim at ruining of vice, yet really they do it no hurt, save that they speak against it. A few of the best of them being ashamed to be found amongst the rest swimming, or rather carried down the stream on the surface, that is, in open vice, have dived to the bottom; but really made as much way under water, as the other above.

3. LET US VIEW MANKIND UNDER THE GOODNESS AND FORBEARANCE OF GOD, THESE HELPS WHICH SOME THINK SUFFICIENT: this word is used, or rather abused as a blind in a matter of very great importance; and men who use it will scarce tell, if they can, even in the subject of the present discourse, in what sense they use it. But let it be as it will, some pretend the works of providence, particularly God's goodness and forbearance sufficient. Well, let us see the experience of the world in this.

If we view mankind under this consideration, we may see them so far from being led to repentance, that  
most

most part never once took notice of this conduct of God. Others, and they not a few, have abused it to the worst purposes. Because judgment against an evil work has not been speedily executed, therefore their hearts were wholly set in them to do evil. The more inquisitive have raised a charge against God as encouraging wickedness. And as for the favors they enjoyed themselves, they looked on them, not as calls to repentance, but as rewards for their pretended virtues, and scanty ones too, below the worth of them. Not a few of them have gone near to arraign God of injustice for lesser afflictions they were tried with; while others have been entangled and tossed to and fro by cross appearances. So that none have by this goodness of God been led to repentance.

4. Let us view men living in the place where REVELATION obtains or where the CHRISTIAN RELIGION is professed and taught, but renouncing and rejecting it, and in profession owning only NATURAL RELIGION: such are the DEISTS among us. If we consider their words, they talk indeed that natural religion is sufficient; and to make it indeed appear so, some of them have adorned it with jewels borrowed from the temple of God, ascribing to nature's light discoveries in religion, which originally were owing to revelation, and were never dreamed of where it did not obtain; though being once discovered, they have gained the consent of sober reason. But now we are not considering the speech, but the power of these men; not what they say of the sufficiency of natural religion, but what real experience they have of it, and what evidence they give of this in their practice.

If



If we thus consider them, we find, that altho' when they have a mind to impose their notion of the sufficiency of natural religion upon others, they pretend, That it is clear as to a great many points or principles, that are confessedly of the greatest moment in religion; yet when they begin to speak more plainly and freely their own inward sentiments, they shew that they are not fixed, no not about the very principles themselves, even those of them which are of the greatest consequence. Mr. Gildon, publisher of the *Oracles of Reason* is not far from asserting two anti-gods, one good, the other evil, and so falls in with the Persians. Blount favors the opinion of Ocellus Lucanus, about the world's eternity, and consequently denies, or at least hesitates about, creation. The immateriality of the soul seems to be flatly rejected by them all. Nor do they seem very firm about its immortality. In short after they have been at so much pains to trim up natural religion, and make it look sufficient-like, they yet express a hesitancy about its sufficiency to eternal life. We may see what Lord Herbert says in his writings. Blount in a letter to Dr. Sydenham, prefixed to the *Deists Reasons*, tells us plainly, that it is not safe to trust deism alone, without christianity joined to it. And the deists hope is summed up in this, in the fourth chapter of the *Summary of the Deists Reasons*, that there is more probability of his salvation, than of the credulous and ill-living papist: and that is just none at all.

Nor does their practice give one jot of a better proof of the sufficiency of that religion they profess: yea, it affords convincing evidence of its weakness, usefulness and utter insufficiency. Their lives shew they are

not in earnest about any thing in religion. They are Latitudinarians in practice. Their words, their actions, have no favor of a regard to a deity: but they go on in all manner of impieties in practice, and perhaps in the end, put a period to a wretched life by their own hands, as Blount, Uriel, Acofta; and others have done; and the survivors justify the deed, upon trifling and childish reasonings; as not knowing but they may one day be put to use the same shift. I am not in the least deterred from asserting this by the commendations that the publisher of the Oracles of Reason gives to Mr. Blount as a person remarkable for virtue.

If a profane, jocular, and unbecoming treatment of the gravest and most important truths that belong even by his own acknowledgment to natural religion; yea, and are the principal props of it; and if gross and palpable difingenuity be instances of that virtue he ascribes to him, and evidences of those just and adequate notions of the deity, in which he says Mr. Blount was bred up: I could give instances enough from the book itself of such virtues: but I love not to rake in the ashes of the dead. Again, others of the deists have wearied themselves in chase of a phantom to no purpose, and having neither the grace nor ingenuity to return to the religion they abandoned, either land in downright atheism in principle and practice, or they throw themselves into the arms of the pretended infallible guide; and thereby give evidence how well founded the Jesuitical maxim is, *Make a man once an Atheist, he will soon turn papist.*

5. LET US VIEW MEN LIVING UNDER THE GOSPEL, EMBRACING IT IN PROFESSION BUT UNAC-

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QUAINTED WITH THAT SPIRIT THAT GIVES LIFE AND POWER TO ITS DOCTRINES, PRECEPTS, PROMISES, THREATS AND ORDINANCES. They, besides, that they are possessed of all the advantages of nature's light, have moreover the superadded advantages of revelation, and its institutions. They have ministers and parents instructing them, and discipline to restrain them; they are trained up in the faith of future rewards and instructed in the nature and excellency of them for their encouragement; they have punishments proposed to them to deter them from sin, which they profess to believe: yet if we consider the practice of the generality of such persons, it gives a sufficient evidence, that all this is not enough. Who but a man blind or foolish can then dote so far as to pretend nature's light alone sufficient, when it is not so, even when helped by so many accessory improvements.

6. IF WE CONSIDER THE EXPERIENCE OF THEM, WHO HAVE RECEIVED THE GOSPEL IN TRUTH, AND FELT ITS POWER, WE FIND THEY HAVE INDEED REACHED THE ENDS OF RELIGION IN PART, and have a fair prospect as to future success. Well, what is their sense of the sufficiency of nature's light? Why if you observe them in their public devotions, you shall hear heavy out-crys of their own darkness, weakness, and wickedness; you may hear serious prayers for divine light, and life to quicken them, strengthen and incline them to follow duty, and support them in it, against the power of temptations, which they own themselves unable to master, without the powerful aids of divine grace. If you follow them into their retirements, where the matter is managed betwixt God and them



alone, where they are under none of these temptations to maintain the credit of any received notions, and therefore must be presumed to speak out the practical sense of the state of their case without any disguise; there you shall find nothing but deep confessions of guilt, darkness and inability, with earnest crys, prayers, and tears, for supplies of grace: and what they attain in matters of religion, you shall find them freely owning, that it was not they but the grace of God in them that brought them to this. And the more any one is concerned about religion, know and has attained in it, still you will find him the more sensible of this state of things. This is but a hint of what might have been said. But I have rather chosen to offer a general scheme of the argument from experience, which every one, from his own private reading and observation may illustrate with observations and particular instances, than to insist upon it at large, which would have required a volume.

WHO HAVE RECEIVED THE GOSPEL IN TRUTH, HAVE FOUND THAT THEY HAVE INDEED REACHED THE END OF RELIGION IN PART, AND HAVE A FAR PROSPECT AS TO FURTHER IMPROVEMENT. WHY? BECAUSE OF THE EVIDENCE OF A LIGHT IN THEIR HEARTS, WHICH IS THE LIGHT OF THE GOSPEL. IF YOU OBSERVE THEM IN THE MOST DIFFICULT SITUATIONS, YOU SHALL HEAR THEM PRAY OUT-CAST OF THEIR OWN DARKNESS, WEAKNESS, AND WICKEDNESS; YOU MAY HEAR THEM PRAY FOR MORE LIGHT, AND THE TO QUICKEN THEIR SIGHT, AND INCREASE THEIR KNOWLEDGE, AND IMPROVE THEM TO FOLLOW THE LIGHT, AND TO BE MORE PERFECT IN IT, AGAINST THE POWER OF TEMPTATIONS, WHICH THEY ARE OTHERWISE UNABLE TO RESIST, WITHOUT THE POWER, AND THE ASSISTANCE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT. IF YOU FOLLOW THEM INTO THEIR RETIREMENT, WHERE THEY ARE MORE PRIVATELY MANAGED BY GOD, AND THEIR

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### INSUFFICIENCY OF REASON.

**T**HUS my dear reader we have given you a short sketch of the weakness and defects of human reason to discover the perfections of God — The right manner of worshipping God — the true happiness of man, or the supreme good — A compleat system of moral virtue — The effectual motives to virtue — The pardon of sin — The suppression of vicious inclinations, and the refining the soul by sanctification — Support under the troubles of life — And effectual consolations against the terrors of death. We have likewise taken a sixfold view of the state and experience of the whole world, including persons of all ages and nations — We have considered man as a creature made to glorify the divine perfections and enjoy God for ever — As greatly interrupted and retarded in the pursuit of this grand end by that darkness, guilt and corruption, which is evidently found in all

all mankind——We have viewed man as under the indulgences of God's abundant goodness and amazing patience, which many persons think sufficient to enable man to attain true happiness——We have viewed the character, spirit, and manners of our modern deists who boast of the powers of reason, and the sufficiency of natural religion——We have viewed the spirit and conduct of all the formal and hypocritical professors of christianity——And, lastly, we have examined the experience and the confessions of sincere christians, with respect to the sufficiency of human reason to lead man to God, and eternal happiness.

And upon the whole every impartial and honest enquirer after truth, must confess the defects of reason and the necessity of divine revelation. And if this be really the case (and let those disprove it that are able) with all mankind, then, how malignant, how detestable, and contemptible is the pride of man!

For creatures so defective in the internal goodness of character, and so imperfect in all our ways and manners as we are, to be proud of our understanding, our virtue and goodness, must be abominable in the sight of God, and must appear contemptible in the eyes of all truly wise and modest men in the world.

Let us view the features of pride, to excite our disgust and loathing of so vile a temper and character: that we may suppress it in ourselves, and oppose it in others.

Pride consists in an excessive self-esteem or high and absurd apprehension of our own wisdom and goodness——An irrational esteem of ourselves——A vain and unbounded self valuation.

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The proud man hath an high opinion of his own understanding, and an haughty apprehension of his own attainments in learning and knowledge,——with his vast superiority to other men in accomplishments.

He has a swelling idea of the value of meer knowledge, without goodness, and without a just regard to its proper influence on the heart and the manners.——

This is exactly the pride of the devil: he has an high opinion of his own intellectual powers, but he has not one grain of true virtue, nor the least desire to be good as well as great.

Thus a proud man whilst he swells with a vain conceit of his learning and rational abilities has not any desire for the possession of true virtue, and the practice of universal duty to God, and all mankind in their several relations to him.

A proud man cannot exercise true virtue and benevolence towards God or his fellow creatures.

*No proud man can be a benevolent or moral man.*

Humility is the valley in which benevolence delights to grow.——Tis a just and smart censure of pride, which the excellent Mr. Seed has given in his discourses, vol. ii. p. 357.——“ For whatever professions of benevolence proud men may make, pride and benevolence are utterly inconsistent.

He who is big with the sentiments of his own dignity, must have an aversion to those who do not seem to have as exalted an opinion of him as he has of himself. Now, as none can think as extravagantly of a proud man, as he thinks of himself; the consequence is, that he must hate all mankind, except a few flatterers.

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He must be angry with those who do not proportion their regard to his **IMAGINARY DESERTS**; which it is impossible to do. For though it be no difficult matter to discern how much merit a man *really* has, it is *not quite so easy* to determine how much he may *imagine* himself to have. Therefore no proud man can be a benevolent or moral man."

It is a truth of natural religion that God cannot be profited by the good actions of any of his creatures. The goodness of none can extend to him.

Were not then the philosophers guilty of intolerable arrogance, pride, and impiety to compare with God, and in some sense allow of an excellency in themselves above what is found even in God, which they did. Can a Christian think of this without the utmost degree of indignation and abhorrence?

But humility is not among the number of their virtues. No, they were a set of the proudest men the earth ever bore. Though some of them pretended to be above vain glory and ostentation.

They nourished pride, in that very point of view, where it least of all ought to have any place (*viz.*) in the practice of virtue, since the most holy creature is unprofitable to his maker.—No wonder that our modern heathens are such admirers of these pagan philosophers, since they feed their abominable and cursed pride in the manner they do.

### F I N I S.

✿ A Contemplation on the Nature, Malignity, Guilt, and Madness of Pride, will be published in due time, in the manner of this essay.

